

Boston Globe

P. B9

Jan 25, 2015

## Jim Queeny, 94; longtime Duxbury teacher, pilot, sailor

By Bryan Marquard

GLOBE STAFF

When he was 82, Jim Queeny jotted down his gratitude for reaching the milestone of each new day, and he graciously added a translation for those less versed in Latin: "How wonderful that we have sur-

vived to this venerable age! *Gaudeamus* . . . let us rejoice!"

The exclamation was a celebration of a life well-lived, and a life he would continue to live well for another dozen years.

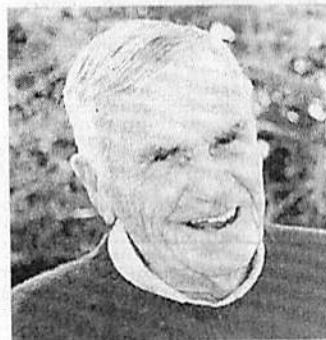
Already he could count among his memories World War II, when he learned to fly

yellow N3N-3 biplanes while training out of Squantum, carving figure eights in the air over Canton Avenue and Blue Hills Reservation. He also spent 32 years in Duxbury's schools, teaching a generation of sixth-graders and counseling scores more who followed. He taught,

too, on endless weekends at the Duxbury Yacht Club, sharing with fledgling sailors his love of open water. And always there was Charlotte, to whom he was married nearly 72 years. She was, he wrote at various points through the years, "still my best friend."

In a passage he would echo years later with his final words, he wrote in 1977: "I can only say that I've enjoyed tremendous good fortune." Mr. Queeny died of congestive heart failure Jan. 3 in the 18th-century Duxbury house where he lived for almost 59 years. He was 94.

"He just had the best life," said his daughter Charlotte Vena of Duxbury, who added that



Jim Queeny frequently expressed joy at living a long and fruitful life.

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# Jim Queeny

her father was legendary in town for his daily 5-mile walks, lifting his wooden walking stick to salute neighbors he passed. Once hospice time arrived, he insisted he be brought to the beach, where he could still manage to walk the length of the parking lot.

"He wore bow ties, even while walking," his daughter said. "He could tie a mean bow tie."

During his teaching years, "he just opened up our world," said Brian Jones, director of music emeritus at Trinity Church, who had been one of Mr. Queeny's Duxbury sixth-grade pupils. "He'd take the whole class over to the public library and let us poke around," Jones said. "He encouraged us to think about life beyond the classroom walls."

Though "an early model of erudition, interested in all sorts of things," Jones recalled that his former teacher seemed "always on the end of a smile. He had something of a sweet, wry twinkle in his eye."

At the yacht club, where Mr. Queeny devoted years of expertise, "he was a mainstay at the waterfront. He taught legions of young sailors learned how to sail under his watchful eye," said former commodore Phyllis Gleason. "He instilled in many a love of our beautiful bay and a deep appreciation of what it means to be on the water."

The sailing master for young aspiring sailors "for eons," Mr. Queeny also was a constant presence on the race committee boat every weekend, Gleason said. "He set the course, he shot the starting gun, he shot the finish gun. He's Mr. Waterfront. If you saw Jim Queeny sitting at the end of our pier, you knew all was right with the world."

The son of a wool merchant, James Francis Queeny was born in Quincy on Jan. 30, 1920. "He was an only child, dearly loved by his parents and his aunts and uncles," his daughter said.

"He defines his youth by the sailing he did, because he lived close to Wollaston Beach," said her husband, Edward Vena.

Mr. Queeny graduated from Thayer Academy and initially attended Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y., before enlisting in the Naval Reserve in 1941. Commissioned as an ensign, he learned to fly in winter flight suits "and best of all, six-foot parachute silk scarves and Luxor goggles when we went aloft," he recalled in World War II reminiscences from his Harvard graduating class.

In 1943, amid switching from flying to becoming an executive officer on a PT boat, Mr. Queeny married Charlotte Fitzpatrick on May 15, 1943. They met at Thayer when she was a freshman quite taken with Mr. Queeny, a handsome senior. "They were the closest of friends," their daughter said. "They cherished each other."

Mr. Queeny wrote that a year after marrying, he marked his first anniversary with "a lonely dinner" in the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool, England, before "the intense lead up to D-day, the passage and more to the 'far shore,' the blockade of the Channel Islands and our encounters with the German forces." A subsequent assignment sent him to the South Pacific, to yet another PT boat, and more

action before he returned home at war's end.

"The long, bitter, and isolated winters at Colgate had no appeal," he wrote, so he successfully applied to transfer to Harvard. After graduating with the class of 1947, Mr. Queeny and his wife went to Dublin, where he received a master's from Trinity College. He then taught in Dedham, Needham, and Hingham before going to Washington, D.C., for a stint as a Navy intelligence research analyst that couldn't end soon enough.

"A New England school teacher in Washington," he wrote in 1953 for a report of his Harvard class, "is like a neurotic Alice-in-Wonderland or worse!"

Later that year, he moved his family to Duxbury, and there he happily stayed. "The days seem to pass more quickly, which might be indicative of some sort of well-ordered existence," he wrote in 1967 for another Harvard class report. Devoted to his children and grandchildren, he created traditions such as piling everyone into cars for restaurant trips Friday nights or getting "reels of Laurel and Hardy films," his daughter said.

Mr. Queeny taught sixth grade until becoming head of guidance at the middle school, retiring in the mid-1980s. "No one could live in a nicer place nor with such wonderful people," he wrote a few years after moving to Duxbury, where he volunteered for several local organizations and was a longtime elected trustee for the town library, a constant destination.

"He was a huge reader. He read every single thing in sight," his daughter said. "He would make a biweekly trip to the Duxbury library, come home with five books, and sit in a rocking chair on the back porch, reading away."

In addition to his wife, daughter, and son-in-law, Mr. Queeny leaves a son, James III of Duxbury; three other daughters, Elizabeth of Duxbury, Suzanne Ragsdale of Georgetown, S.C., and Caroline of Chatham; eight grandchildren; and a great-grandson.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday in First Parish Church in Duxbury.

Peg Crawford, who was Mr. Queeny's hospice nurse, said that he "valued deeply conversation and the interior of people. When he asked you how you were, he really wanted to know." She paused, and added: "I get choked up talking about this man. As a hospice nurse, I didn't want him to die. I wanted to have more. His value for life deeply impressed me. It was kind of jaw-dropping, the reverence he had for life. This is what gratitude is."

Several months ago, at the outset of hospice care, "the first words he said to me were, 'I'm so very fortunate,' and those were also the last words I heard on the last day of his life. As he was receiving the sacrament of the sick, he had his hands to his face and his fingers together in prayer. And when the priest finished, he whispered so quietly we could barely hear, 'I'm so very fortunate.'"

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